

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-12 /084 W
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P 120937Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6463
INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BERLIN 00236

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, GE
SUBJECT: EMBASSY'S PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF GDR
- OPPOSITION MANIFESTO
REF: A. BERLIN 24, B. BERLIN 60, C. BERLIN 202, D. BONN
- 176, D. BONN 302, F. BONN 366.

1. SUMMARY: IN THE EMBASSY'S VIEW, WE DO NOT THINK THE
SPIEGEL-PUBLISHED OPPOSITION MANIFESTO IS REFLECTIVE OF
A SERIOUS RUPTURE WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SED, OR
THAT THERE IS AN ORGANIZED POLITICAL OPPOSITION WITHIN
THE GDR OR THAT THE POWER OF THE SED LEADERSHIP IS
SERIOUSLY UNDERMINED. THE MANIFESTO IS PROBABLY GENUINE,
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I.E., WE DOUBT THAT IT IS A FABRICATION PLANTED BY EAST-
ERN OR WESTERN INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONS; AND IT SEEMS
LIKELY THAT IT IS THE PRODUCT OF EAST GERMAN DISSIDENTS.
HOWEVER, WE SUSPECT THAT THEY ARE NOT HIGH RANKING MEMBERS
OF THE SED OR THAT THEY REPRESENT ANYTHING LIKE AN
ORGANIZED GROUP.

THE SUGGESTION IN SOME OF THE WEST GERMAN PRESS, PARTICULARLY DER SPIEGEL, THAT THE MANIFESTO IS A SIGN THAT THERE ARE FUNDAMENTAL SPLITS IN THE SED HIERARCHY, AND THAT HONECKER'S POSITION HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY UNDERMINED, HAS NO FOUNDATION AS FAR AS WE CAN SEE. THE MANIFESTO ALMOST CERTAINLY DOES ARTICULATE MANY OF THE CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS FELT, BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE PARTY. IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT THE CONSEQUENCES BUT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE EFFECTS. THE PUBLICATION PRESENTS THE REGIME WITH CERTAIN PROBLEMS. IT MAY FEEL COMPELLED TO PROVE TO ITS OWN POPULATION THAT THE IDEA OF OPPOSITION WITHIN THE SED IS A FRAUD. BUT WHAT FORM SUCH PROOF MIGHT TAKE--TIGHTER INTERNAL SECURITY OR MORE MASS DEMONSTRATIONS ALONG THE LINES OF THE LUXEMBURG/LIEBKNECHT MEMORIAL MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 15--REMAINS TO BE SEEN. BECAUSE OF THE ANTI-SOVIET CHARACTER OF THE DOCUMENT, THE USSR MAY BE PUTTING PRESSURE ON THE LEADERSHIP TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO REPETITION AND THAT THE IDEAS DO NOT SPREAD. THIS COULD LEAD TO A TIGHTENING UP OF INTERNAL SECURITY CONTROLS. HOWEVER, THE MOST IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF THE MANIFESTO IS ON FRG-GDR RELATIONS. WHILE THERE IS A RISK OF AT LEAST A TEMPORARY CHILLING IN RELATIONS, THE EVIDENCE SO FAR IS THAT THE GDR DOES NOT WANT TO REACT SO STRONGLY THAT IT STOPS THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

2. ORIGINS AND AUTHENTICITY. THE EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION. CONFIDENTIAL

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THE TENSION REGARDING THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE MANIFESTO OR OF ITS AUTHENTICITY, OTHER THAN WHAT HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY THE EDITORS OF DER SPIEGEL. WE ARE UNAWARE OF THE EXISTENCE OF ANY ORGANIZED OPPOSITION WITHIN THE PARTY OR INDEED WITHIN THE GDR GENERALLY, AND WE DOUBT THAT ANY SUCH OPPOSITION EXISTS IN THE SENSE OF A LARGE, COHESIVE AND PERMANENT GROUP.

3. WE ARE AWARE THAT THE WEST GERMAN PRESS HAS TREATED THE MANIFESTO WITH SOME SKEPTICISM, SUGGESTING THAT IT MIGHT BE A PLANT BY EITHER EAST GERMAN OR WEST GERMAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES. WE DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE MANIFESTO IS A PRODUCT OF THE GDR MINISTRY FOR STATE SECURITY OR OF "HARDLINERS" IN THE POLITBURO. THE ANTI-SOVIET COMPLAINTS AND THE DIRECT ATTACKS ON MEMBERS OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP ARE TOO SENSITIVE TO RISK CIRCULATING IN THAT THEY COULD ENCOURAGE FURTHER PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND COMPLAINTS. IT ALSO RISKS SOVIET REACTION AGAINST THOSE RESPONSIBLE. WHILE WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS LIKELY THAT NOT ALL POLITBURO MEMBERS SEE EYE-TO-EYE ON ISSUES AND THAT THERE MAY BE THOSE WHOSE SUPPORT FOR HONECKER IS LESS THAN 100 PERCENT OR WHO OBJECT TO THE GROWING ECONOMIC IMPACT

OF THE FRG AND WESTERN CULTURE GENERALLY, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE LEADERSHIP IS DIVIDED IN A WAY THAT ONE FACTION WOULD BE PREPARED TO MOUNT A DANGEROUS CAMPAIGN FOR PURELY POWER OR POLICY CHANGE REASONS.

4. ALL THE EVIDENCE (ADMITTEDLY SLIM) THAT WE HAVE INDICATES THAT HONECKER'S POSITION IS FAIRLY SECURE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY MAJOR INFIGHTING WITHIN THE POLITBURO COULD TAKE PLACE WITHOUT SOVIET KNOWLEDGE OR THAT ANY CAMPAIGN BY ONE GROUP TO DISLodge ANOTHER COULD BE CARRIED

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6464

INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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OUT WITHOUT SOVIET APPROVAL. AS FAR AS WE ARE ABLE TO DETERMINE, HONECKER'S POSITION WITH THE SOVIETS IS FIRM. HE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN WELL RECEIVED DURING HIS RECENT MEETINGS WITH BREZHNEV. IN ADDITION, HONECKER FELT SURE ENOUGH OF HIMSELF, FOR EXAMPLE, RECENTLY TO MAKE AN EXTENDED TRIP ABROAD (TO VIETNAM, NORTH KOREA AND THE PHILIPPINES). IN FACT, AN UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBER OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN OUT OF THE COUNTRY DURING THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS, TRAVELING WITH APPARENT ASSURANCE.

5. WHILE WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, WE BELIEVE THE MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION OF THE MANIFESTO IS THAT IT COMES FROM EAST GERMAN SOURCES. HOWEVER, WE CONFIDENTIAL

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SERIOUSLY DOUBT WHETHER IT IS THE PRODUCT OF ANY ORGANIZED OPPOSITION. WE THINK IT MUCH MORE LIKELY THAT IT WAS WRITTEN BY ONE OR MORE DISSIDENTS WHO ARE PORTRAYING THEMSELVES AS SPOKESMEN FOR A NON-EXISTENT MOVEMENT, PERHAPS HOPING THAT THE MANIFESTO WILL ITSELF INSPIRE SUCH A MOVEMENT THROUGH FEEDBACK VIA THE WEST GERMAN MEDIA. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THESE DISSIDENTS MAY BE PARTY MEMBERS, BUT WE DOUBT THEY ARE OF A HIGH LEVEL. ALTHOUGH THE AUTHORS CLEARLY HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT PARTY PERSONALITIES, IT IS THE KIND OF INFORMATION WHICH IS NOT LIMITED TO HIGH-RANKING MEMBERS. AS WE HAVE NOTED EARLIER, THE STYLE IN WHICH THE MANIFESTO IS WRITTEN IS UNCHARACTERISTIC OF PARTY FUNCTIONARIES. THE AUTHORS OF THE MANIFESTO ARE VAGUELY MARXIST, DRAWING ON WRITERS RANGING FROM ROSA LUXEMBURG TO RUDOLF BAHRO AND ARE CLEARLY INSPIRED IN GENERAL TERMS BY EUROCOMMUNISM. THE MANIFESTO IS OBVIOUSLY INTENDED FOR A WIDE AUDIENCE, IT IS WRITTEN IN A POPULAR, NON-DIALECTIC STYLE AND SEEMS INTENDED FOR A WIDE AUDIENCE OUTSIDE THE PARTY APPARATUS.

6. THE MANIFESTO IS BASICALLY A CATALOG OF COMPLAINTS AND FRUSTRATIONS. THE LIST CONTAINS NOTHING NEW; THESE ARE ALL CRITICISMS WHICH, TO A GREATER OR LESSER DEGREE, ARE HEARD AMONG THE POPULATION, ALTHOUGH RARELY FROM THE SAME PERSON OR GROUP.

7. THE MANIFESTO DIRECTLY CRITICIZES HONECKER AND CERTAIN KEY MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO, WHILE OTHERS ARE NOT MENTIONED AT ALL. NO REFERENCE, FOR EXAMPLE, IS MADE OF STOPH WHO, ACCORDING TO SOME SPECULATION, HAS BEEN AT ODDS WITH HONECKER. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE ON THE BASIS OF THE DOCUMENT ITSELF TO CONCLUDE THAT IT CONFIDENTIAL

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FAVORS ONE FACTION OR GROUP WITHIN THE POLITBURO OVER ANOTHER. IT APPEARS RATHER TO BE AN ALL-OUT ATTACK ON THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. THE MANIFESTO CONTAINS NO REVELATIONS ABOUT THE PRIVILEGES ENJOYED BY THE PARTY LEADERSHIP THAT ARE NOT

ALREADY WIDELY KNOWN WITHIN THE PARTY AND THE OTHER
PIECES OF GOSSIP ARE HARDLY DEVASTATING. WE WOULD
CONCLUDE THAT NOTHING IN THE MANIFESTO ITSELF
WOULD WEAKEN HONECKER'S POSITION DIRECTLY.

8. IMPACT. IT IS TOO EARLY TO MAKE ANY
DEFINITIVE ASSESSMENT AS TO THE POSSIBLE DOMESTIC
IMPACT OF THE MANIFESTO. ASSUMING AS WE DO THAT
IT WAS NOT A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT BY THE GDR TO
SABOTAGE GDR/FRG RELATIONS, WE JUDGE THAT ITS
PUBLICATION MUST PRESENT THE REGIME WITH SEVERAL
SERIOUS PROBLEMS, THE MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH
IS TO PREVENT THE IDEA FROM GAINING CURRENCY THAT
AN ORGANIZED OPPOSITION EXISTS IN THE GDR OR WILL
BE TOLERATED. IF THE EAST BERLIN REGIME BELIEVES
THERE IS AN OPPOSITION MOVEMENT, WHETHER ORGANIZED
OR NOT, THIS COULD LEAD TO CHARGES OF NEGLIGENCE
AGAINST THE SECURITY SERVICE AND A POSSIBLE
TIGHTENING UP OF THE INTERNAL CONTROLS
AGAINST DISSIDENTS. WE NOTE IN THIS CONNECTION
THAT MINISTER OF STATE SECURITY MIELKE WAS RECENTLY
HONORED BY THE POLITBURO ON THE OCCASION OF HIS
70TH BIRTHDAY IN WHAT APPEARED TO BE AN
EXPRESSION OF FULL SUPPORT FOR HIS SERVICES TO THE
REGIME.

9. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE RISKS THAT
GDR/FRG RELATIONS COULD AT LEAST FOR A TIME

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DETERIORATE. HOWEVER, ALL EVIDENCE SO FAR POINTS TO A DESIRE ON THE PART OF THE GDR NOT TO PROVOKE A BREAKDOWN IN THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS. WE BELIEVE THE GDR WISHES TO SEE THIS PROCESS CONTINUE, IN PART FOR ECONOMIC REASONS. AS A RESULT, THE GDR HAS REACTED WITH SOME DEGREE OF CAUTION AND TEMPERANCE, ALTHOUGH ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE WEST GERMAN MEDIA AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES CONTINUES UNABATED. IT IS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT THE REGIME MAY BE UNDER PRESSURE TO TAKE STRONGER ACTIONS FROM THE SOVIETS OR FROM INTERNAL ELEMENTS WHO MAY WISH TO SLOW DOWN THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS WITH THE
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FRG.

10. WE DOUBT WHETHER THE PUBLICATION OF THE MANIFESTO WILL CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITHIN THE PARTY. THE CALL FOR ORGANIZED OPPOSITION IS NOT LIKELY TO STRIKE A RESPONSIVE CHORD. IN FACT THE EFFECT MAY BE FOR THE PARTY REGULARS TO CLOSE RANKS. THE APPEAL WAS NOT TO PARTY MEMBERS IN ANY CASE BUT RATHER TO THE DISCONTENTED AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

11. THE EFFECTS OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE MANIFESTO WILL DEPEND TO A LARGE DEGREE ON THE ACTIONS WHICH THE EAST GERMAN REGIME TAKES. WE CANNOT PREDICT AT THIS STAGE WHETHER IT WILL CHOOSE TO IGNORE THE EVENT, TRY TO DEAL WITH SOME OF THE UNDERLYING PROBLEMS IT REVEALS OR CRACK DOWN ON DISSIDENCE AND OPPOSITION -- REAL OR IMAGINED. BOLEN

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Action: RELEASED
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